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THE PROPHECY

AND

OTHER POEMS.

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AUTHOR OF "CONNECTICUT IN THE WAR," "A HELPING HAND," "A MID-SUMMER LARK" (POEMS), "THE VANDERBILTS AND THE STORY OF THEIR FORTUNE," "DESERET" (AN OPERA), "THE BOURBON BALLADS," AND "FOLKS NEXT DOOR."

L. & W. Bill, Publishers,
New York, 1893.

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THE PROPHECY — 1492.

Read at the Opening of the World's Columbian Exposition at Chicago, Illinois, May 1, 1893.

Sadly Columbus watched the nascent moon
Drown in the Gloomy Ocean's western deeps.

Strange birds that day had fluttered in the sails,
And strange flowers floated round the wandering keel,
And yet no land. And now, when thro the dark
The Santa Maria leaped before the gale,
And angry billows tossed the caravels,
As to destruction, Gomez Rascon came
With Captain Pinzon thro the frenzied seas,
And to the Admiral brought a parchment scroll,
Saying. "Good Master: Read this writing here;
An earnest prayer it is from all the fleet.
The crew would fain turn back in utter fear.
No longer to the Pole the compass points.
The sailor's star reels dancing down the sky.
You saw but yestereve an albatross
Drop dead on deck beneath the flying scud.
The Devil's wind blows madly from the east
Into the land of Nowhere, and the sea
Keeps sucking us adown the maelstrom's maw.
Francisco says the edge of earth is near,
And off to Erebus we slide unhelmed.

Last Sunday night Diego saw a witch
Dragging the Nina by her forechains west
And wildly dancing on a dolphin's back;
And, as she danced, the brightest star in heaven
Slipped from its leash and sprang into the sea,
Like Lucifer, and left a trail of blood.
O, Master, hear me! — turn again to Spain,
Obedient to the omens, or, perchance,
The terror-stricken crew, to escape their doom,
May mutiny and—"
"Gomez Rascon, peace!"
Exclaimed the Admiral, "thou hast said enough!
Now, prithee, leave me. I would be alone."

Then eagerly Columbus sought a sign,
In sea and sky and in his lonely heart,
But found, instead of presages of hope,
The black and ominous portents of despair.
The wild wind roared around him, and he heard
Shrill voices shriek "Return! — return! — return!"
He thought of Genoa and dreams of youth,
His father's warning and his mother's prayers,
Confiding Beatriz, her prattling babe,
The life and mirth and warmth of old Castile,
And tempting comfort of the peaceful land,
And sad winds moaned "return! — return! — return!"

As thus he mused, he paced the after deck
And gazed upon the luminous waves astern.
Strange life was in the phosphorescent foam,
And thro the goblin glow there came and went,
Like elfin shadows on an opal sea,
Prophetic pictures of the land he sought.

He saw the end of his victorious quest.
He saw, ablaze on Isabella's breast,
The gorgeous Antillean jewels rest—
The Islands of the West!

He saw invading Plenty dispossess
Old Poverty, the land with bounty bless,
And thro the wailing caverns of Distress
Walk star-eyed Happiness!

He saw the Bourbon and Braganza prone,
For ancient error tardy to atone,
Giving the plundered people back their own
And flying from the throne.

He saw an empire radiant as the day,
Harnessed to law but under Freedom's sway,
Proudly arise, resplendent in array,
To show the world the way.

He saw celestial Peace in mortal guise,
And, filled with hope and thrilled with high emprise,
Lifting its tranquil forehead to the skies,
A vast republic rise.

He saw, beyond the hills of golden corn,
Beyond the curve of Autumn's opulent horn,
Ceres and Flora laughingly adorn
The bosom of the morn.

He saw a cloth of gold across the gloom,
An arabesque from Evolution's loom,
And from the barren prairie's driven spume
Imperial cities bloom.

He saw an iron dragon dashing forth
On pathways East, and West, and South and North,
Its bonds uniting in beneficent girth
Remotest ends of earth.

He saw the lightnings run an elfin race,
Where trade and love and pleasure interlace,
And severed friends in Ariel's embrace
Communing face to face.

He saw Relief thro deadly dungeons grope;
Foes turn to brothers, black despair to hope,
And cannon rust along the grass-grown slope,
And rot the gallows rope.

He saw the babes on Labor's cottage floor,
The bright walls hung with luxury more and more,
And Comfort, radiant with abounding store,
Wave welcome at the door.

He saw the myriad spindles flutter round;
The myriad mill-wheels shake the solid ground;
The myriad homes where jocund joy is found,
And Love is throned and crowned.

He saw exalted Ignorance under ban,
Though panoplied in force since time began,
And Science, consecrated, lead the van,
The Providence of man.

The pictures came and paled and passed away.
And then the Admiral turned as from a trance,
His lion face aglow, his luminous eyes
Lit with mysterious fire from hidden suns:
"Now, Martin, to thy waiting helm again!
Haste to the Pinta! Fill her sagging sails,

For on my soul hath dawned a wondrous sight.
Lo!—thro this segment of the watery world
Uprose a hemisphere of glorious life!—
A realm of golden grain and fragrant fruits,
And men and women wise and masterful,
Who dwelt at peace in rural cottages
And splendid cities bursting into bloom—
Great lotus blossoms on a flowery sea.
And happiness was there, and bright-winged Hope—
High Aspiration, soaring to the stars!
And then methought, O, Martin, through the storm
A million faces turned on me and smiled.
Now go we forward—forward!—fear avaunt!
I will abate no atom of my dream,
Though all the devils of the underworld
Hiss in the sails and grapple to the keel!
Haste to the Pinta! Westward keep her prow,
For I have had a vision full of light!
Keep her prow westward in the sunset's wake
From this hour hence and let no man look back!"

* * * * * *

Then from the Pinta's foretop fell a cry—
A trumpet-song—"Light-ho! Light-ho! Light-ho!"

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